

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5172

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 20, 2009

Title: An act relating to establishing a University of Washington center for human rights.

Brief Description: Establishing a University of Washington center for human rights.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Hobbs, Kastama, McAuliffe, Jarrett, Pridemore, Brown, Keiser, Jacobsen, Kohl-Welles and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/20/09 [DPS, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5172 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kilmer, Chair; Jarrett, Vice Chair; Hewitt, Kastama, McAuliffe and Shin.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Becker, Ranking Minority Member; Pflug and Stevens.

Staff: Wendy Malkin (786-7434)

Background: At least ten universities in the United States have centers for human rights, including the University of Iowa, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of California, Berkeley. Each center has a slightly different focus, but generally the centers provide an interdisciplinary location for research, policy analysis, and dialogue on human rights. Some of the centers have an internship or advocacy component. Most of the centers are located in a law school or a public policy school, but a few are located in other areas, such as international programs.

The University of Washington (UW) has a human rights program that allows students at the Seattle, Tacoma, and Bothell campuses to obtain a minor in human rights. Students can choose from a selection of courses taught across the university's three campuses.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The UW Center for Human Rights is created. The mission of the center is to expand opportunities for Washington residents to receive a world-class education in human rights, generate research data and expert knowledge to enhance public and private policymaking, and become an academic center for human rights teaching and research in the nation. Key substantive issues for the center include the rights of all persons to security against violence; the rights of immigrants, Native Americans, and ethnic or religious minorities; human rights and the environment; health as a human right; human rights and trade; the human rights of working people; and women's rights as human rights.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Thanks to a private endowment the UW has established a human rights chair and program for students to get a minor in human rights. UW is now poised to take off as a center for human rights. UW has many students and staff that focus on human rights, but they are dispersed across campuses and disciplines. UW needs a way to put these faculty and students together through a central clearinghouse. The center will give visibility and coherence to work already being done. It will also allow UW to go to private donors to sustain its efforts. The center does not intend to look to the state during this budget crises, it will look to private donors. UW was a leader in human rights at one point – we want to become a leader again. Creating a Center for Human Rights will put resources together in a more efficient way. Currently, the work on human rights at UW is spread out among different campuses and disciplines. Unitarian Central American Network has been sponsoring human rights witnesses in Central America for some time. It works closely with UW to have a place for the witnesses to tell their story and educate students. The network would also rely on the center for a connection to academic work. The Human Rights Center would be a great way to have a place to record memories for a long time. It can keep records of the past for our future education. Currently, students come upon the opportunity to do a minor in human rights by chance because the university does not have a central way to do outreach on the minor. The center would provide a central outreach point to students.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; John Van Eenwyk, International Trauma Treatment Program; Angelina Godoy, Alexandra Larsson, Kara Mann, UW; Bruce Kochis, UW Bothell; Timothy Richards, UW Law School; Peter Jackson, Jackson School; Kaaren Johnson, Unitarian Central America Network; Alyson McLean, UW Guatemala Project; Travis Thomas, Real Change Homeless Employment Project; Marc Brenman, citizen; Kelly Miller, Shima Houshyar, Devon Cook, UW student.